Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT WEBER SCHOOL DISTRICT March 18, 2008

The attached report contains the results of the first two phases (Self-Assessment Process and On-Site Validation Visit) of the Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS). This Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process is conducted by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) Special Education Services (SES), as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. The process is designed to focus resources on improving results for students with disabilities through enhanced partnerships between charter school and district programs, USOE-SES, the Utah Personnel Development Center, parents, and advocates.

The first phase of this process included the development of a Program Improvement Plan. The second phase, On-Site Validation, conducted in Weber School District on February 5-6, 2008, included student record reviews, interviews with school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Parent surveys were also mailed to a small sample of parents.

This report contains a more complete description of the process utilized to collect data and to determine strengths, areas out of compliance with the requirements of IDEA, and recommendations for improvement in each of the core IDEA areas.

Areas of Strength

The validation team found the following:

General Supervision

- The special education coordinators are knowledgeable and provide continuous training for special education and regular education staff.
- There is a training program in place for paraprofessionals.
- There is a system in place for monitoring files twice yearly in November and April. Teachers are
 not threatened by this continuous monitoring as it is a checkpoint for ensuring compliance, in
 addition to providing more training and an opportunity for answering questions.
- The teachers were systematically trained to use Goalview with great follow-up and incentives.
- Teachers have greatly improved in their progress monitoring and reporting to parents.
- There is a wide variety of researched-based materials for the broad range of abilities and ages of students with disabilities. There are continuous training programs available so that staff can implement programs with fidelity.
- Professional development is followed by teacher involvement in professional learning communities to review data and share ideas for improving instructional practices so that progress at an optimum rate.
- There is a district-wide expectation that effective instruction in special education involves high levels of student engagement, active learning, multiple opportunities for response, high reinforcement for academics and behavior, direct and explicit instruction, and scientifically researched base materials used with fidelity.
- There are experts within Weber School District who can train other teachers in working with students with challenging behaviors, autism, reading deficits and other areas of expertise.
- Elementary teachers are involved in the IEP process; regular teachers are more involved in writing IEP goals and have access to IEP goals.
- 75 special education files were reviewed and 35 district personnel and six students were interviewed during the self-assessment process.
- The coordinators are wonderful, knowledgeable, and helpful.
- Weber School District has programs that address the needs of students with disabilities from early intervention to preschool to school age to post-high.
- There is good collaboration between special education and general education teachers.
- Special education files are well organized across the district and teachers are knowledgeable regarding their file contents.
- Student eligibility decisions are documented by the team, including those who are evaluated and determined as not eligible for special education and related services.
- Eligibility determinations were current.

- District-wide special education goals are determined annually by the Weber School District Special Education Department. Goals primarily address curriculum and instructional improvements. Progress towards those goals is evaluated quarterly.
- Orientation and mobility assessments are conducted and considered during eligibility and IEP discussions for students with vision impairments.
- School administrators are provided with observation forms and criteria to consider for special
 education classroom evaluations. The observation forms are tailored to provide special
 education personnel with specific feedback regarding the use of research-based curriculum,
 fidelity of instruction, rates of praise, and student response rates and data.
- Weber School District provided schools with a listing of research based curriculum for language arts, reading, and math. The listing includes a summary of the types of instruction activities included, evaluation tools, and materials.
- Records of access are included in special education files, which are stored in secure environments with posted Access Authorizations. Special education staff are trained on confidentiality procedures.
- Initial evaluations are competed within 45 school days of receiving parental consent.
- School administrators use a discipline tracker to record discipline data at each school.
- Students with disabilities are included in all school activities. In some schools, students with
 disabilities are able to participate in functional programs which include school job duties. School
 staff, when interviewed, described ways they increase students with disabilities participation with
 nondisabled peers.
- Active special education teachers are used as mentors for beginning teachers.
- Weber School District has implemented innovative interventions for teaching self-monitoring skills for students with autism.
- Professional learning communities provide additional opportunities for general education and special education teacher collaboration.
- Best Buddies, a collaborative program involving students from Weber State University and students with disabilities, provided opportunities for community involvement and appropriate behavior modeling.
- School staff, when interviewed, described receiving assistance from paraprofessionals, as well as
 the training provided for paraprofessionals by Weber School District Special Education
 Department. The paraprofessional training addresses confidentiality procedures and data
 collection. School staff and parents also expressed appreciation for the district support.
- Weber School District participates in the Utah Behavior Initiative (UBI). Some schools had a focus on addressing bullying, while other schools had evidence of school-wide rules.
- CRT scores demonstrate an upwards improvement trend for students with disabilities in math and language arts.
- Evaluations are sufficiently comprehensive to address all of the student's special education and related service needs.
- Data are reviewed by the evaluation/eligibility team prior to conducting a reevaluation.
- The Special Education Director tracks special education personnel caseloads, certification, and highly qualified status.
- Special education staff and school administrators receive ongoing professional development on USBE Special Education Rules.
- School staff, when interviewed, described the referral process, as well as strategies used for struggling students prior to referral for a special education evaluation.
- Special education teachers are provided with up-to-date technology on a 4 year rotation; assistive technology needs are addressed during IEP meetings, with input from the Weber School District augmentative team.
- Weber School District Special Education Department has developed a partnership with the Curriculum Department. A tiered instruction program is being piloted in some elementary schools and specie education teachers are included in most curriculum trainings with their school teams.

Parent Involvement

- Parents feel like they are involved in the IEP process and were present at the IEPs according to the file reviews.
- There is flexibility in working with and meeting with parents.
- Preschool and kindergarten transition meetings are well-organized and greatly involve parents.

- Weber School District has improved at measuring and documenting progress on IEP goals. Parents also feel that their student is making progress towards IEP goals.
- 88% of interviewed parents reported receiving an explanation of their Procedural Safeguards.
- Parents also reported having an opportunity to provide input during their child's evaluation; they
 also felt that the evaluation and IEP team listened to and considered their input.
- Use of surrogate parents is documented in special education files, when appropriate.
- Parents are provided with written prior notice of actions both proposed and refused by the district.
- Parents, when interviewed, described special education staff as devoted and caring.
- Parents, when interviewed, expressed appreciation for the teachers providing intensive instruction for their students. They also felt that the staff were proactive to their students' needs.
- Parents were aware of ongoing progress monitoring and felt that their students with disabilities were making progress.
- Parents are included in school community councils and the UPIPS process.
- Parents described receiving frequent communications from school in home notes, emails, and phone calls.
- Procedural Safeguards are provided and explained to parents at least annually, as documented in special education files and described in parent and staff interviews. School staff, when interviewed, were able to accurately describe contents of the Procedural Safeguards.
- Progress reports regarding IEP goals were provided to parents and documented in special education files. IEPs addressed how often progress would be measured.
- Copies of eligibility determinations and IEPs to parents were documented.
- Notice for IEP meetings included discussion of placement, and where appropriate, transition.
- Consent for evaluation and placement included in special education files.
- Special education forms are available in Spanish. Interpreters are used for parents of students whose primary home language is other than English. Documentation of interpreter attendance is included in special education files.
- Special education meetings are scheduled at mutually agreeable times, as described during the parent focus group.
- Parent input is solicited by school staff during evaluation, eligibility, and IEP meetings, as
 described by parents and school staff.
- Parents stated that their suggestions were generally implemented.
- Parents, during the parent focus group, reported that their school facilitates opportunities for them
 to provide input other than at IEP meetings and encourages their involvement as a means of
 improving services for their student with disabilities.

Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment

- Accommodations are made in special education classes and regular classes without enabling students
- Regular education teachers are involved in the IEP process, including writing goals. They have access to IEP goals.
- There is collaboration and team teaching occurring between regular and special education teachers.
- There is a testing program in place to measure IEP progress.
- Goalview has helped ensure that all required elements are addressed in IEPs.
- Goalview has helped teachers write more objective present level of academic achievement and functional performance statements, goals, and other components of IEPs.
- Students reported attending IEP meetings and would recommend special education to a friend who was having problems at school.
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statements
 include current data and how the disability affects the involvement and progress of the student in
 the general education curriculum.
- Special education teachers were provided with professional development regarding PLAAFP requirements, using a four point rubric for completeness. PLAAFP statements are easy to understand for all team members.
- Current IEPs are included in files.
- IEP goals address areas of education need as specified in the PLAAFP statement.
- Objectives were included for all students with disabilities.

- IEPs were complete and addressed special factors and extended school year (ESY) decisions. Special education teachers described ESY considerations during IEP meetings.
- Physical education is available to all students, including students with disabilities. If a specially designed PE was proscribed in the IEP, it is provided.
- Placement decisions are determined by the IEP team. Initial placement begins as soon as
 possible following development of the IEP. Weber School District has a full continuum of
 placement options available.
- General education teachers are provided with IEP summary sheets which include specific information they need to address the student's needs in their classrooms.
- IEP team members, during interviews and focus groups, described methods for coordinating and collaborating with other team members in an ongoing basis using email, personal contact, phone calls, home notes, draft IEPs, student profiles, class visits, and team meetings.
- Several schools have opportunities for all students to receive additional academic instruction before school or during the school day. There were also positive reinforcement programs in place at each visited which focused on appropriate behavior expectations.
- During classroom observations, students with disabilities were provided instruction on IEP goals, given multiple opportunities to practice skills, provided additional assistance by peer tutors and paraprofessionals, and utilized assistive technology.
- Bus drivers were provided with positive behavior training, which addressed methods to manage behavior on the bus.
- Students, during student focus groups, attended IEP meetings and could describe the purpose of an IEP. They also attributed improved academic skills as a result of their specialized instruction.
- School staff, when interviewed, were knowledgeable regarding IDEA disciplinary requirements for students with disabilities.
- Special education teachers described ways to utilize data from U-PASS and curriculum based measures.

Transitions

- Preschool and transition meetings are well-organized and greatly involve parents.
- The post-high program has a system for monitoring goals on IEPs and several options for meeting graduation requirements and while completing transition goals.
- Weber School District has two post-high school programs for students with disabilities.
- IEPs are in place by the 3rd birthday, if applicable. Progress on this timeline was evident during file reviews and staff interviews.
- Special education files contained documentation of transition plans with LEA participation and consideration of the IFSP.
- Utah Preschool Outcomes (UPOD) forms are included in applicable files and completed.
- During classroom observations and file reviews, evidence of High Scope training was observed.
- Students with disabilities in grades 10-12 complete a transition folder that they take with them as they exit school. The folder contains transition planning activities, including a resume and interviewing questions for practice.
- All applicable reviewed files contained school-to-post school transition plans.
- Postsecondary goals in required areas were documented in most reviewed files. Postsecondary goals were specific and well written.
- Use of age appropriate transition assessments was documented in 100% of applicable reviewed files
- All applicable files reviewed contained annual goals designed to assist students in reaching their postsecondary goals.
- Most files reviewed contained transition services focused on improving the academic achievement of the student.
- LIFE post-high school program schedules community participation and job-skill activities for students with disabilities. School transition programs provide prevocational, vocational training, and community experiences.
- Some special education files contained documentation of team review of graduation credits and substitutions.

Disproportionality

- Necessary steps are being taken to correctly identify students who are English language learners and need to be referred for special education evaluations.
- Information regarding student race/ethnicity and primary home language is easily available for each student.

Areas of Systemic Noncompliance*

- Reevaluation timeline exceeded.
- Evaluation procedures not followed: Autism autism checklist and prior medical history not
 documented; Developmental Delay when adequate evaluation data available, other disability
 categories not used; Multiple Disabilities prior medical history and vision and hearing results not
 documented; Specific Learning Disabilities Observation and relevant behavior during
 observation not documented.
- IEP timeline exceeded.
- IEP goals were not measurable.
- School to Post-School Transition: Course of study not documented; transition plan contained interagency linkages in reviewed files with no documentation that an agency representative was invited to IEP meeting.
- Age of majority rights given not documented or done after 17th birthday.

^{*}These areas represent items where the visiting team could not locate appropriate documentation of requirements of IDEA 2004 and Utah State Special Education Rules in student records or other data sources.